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Mush. Mush. Mush. First Baptist Church Cornerstone Contents, Martin, Tennessee

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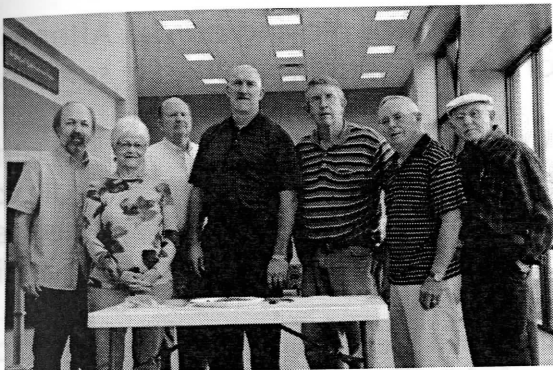
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Left to right: Larry Holder, Patti Waggener, Rev. Larry Washburn, Dr. Mike Sams, James Bryant, Dr. Marvin Downing, Tom Frey. Not shown: Thelda Frey.

Mush. Mush. Mush.

First Baptist Church Cornerstone Contents

Martin, Tennessee

By Marvin Downing

On Thursday, October 25, 2012, nine First Baptist Church members expected to find mush when they examined the contents of the 1905 auditorium cornerstone removed from a home freezer the night before. If so, it was dried mush if there is such a thing.

We anticipated fragments, too, and they were there abundantly, ranging from small paper pieces to a Bible cover. As best as we could discover besides that back, there were parts of *The Martin Mail* of December 2, 1904, *The Baptist Banner*, and *The Primitive Baptist*. All of those three periodicals were then published in Martin. According to the research of Rebecca and Larry Holder, that *Mail* issue was a special edition which included an extensive history of Martin and Weakley County. There was obviously Scripture on a piece

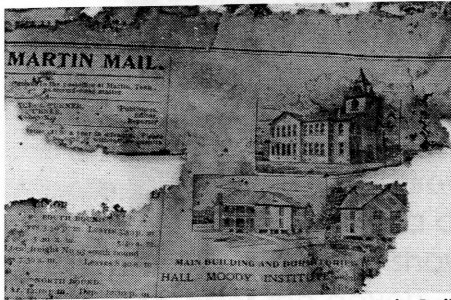
about the size of small playing cards. Attempts to separate any of it basically resulted in something like chalk.

We were gratified to find near each other the masthead of that *Martin Mail* and a partial picture of Hall-Moody, a Martin Baptist Institute then less than 5 years old and forerunner of the University of Tennessee at Martin.

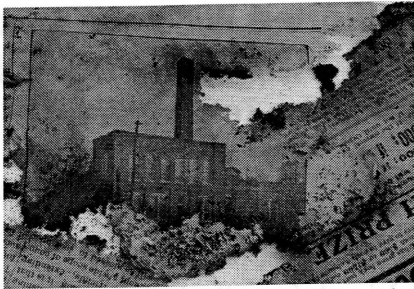
Another scrap showed the old cigar factory at the corner of Broadway and Frederick Streets. In later years Martin Manufacturing occupied that spot where The Color Shop now is.

How do you separate such materials? Of course, carefully! Education and Administration Minister Larry Washburn early whipped out his pocket knife and surgically operated, peeling back a sheet at a time. But a knife can lift only so much. We supposedly needed a spatula which no one had in their pocket, purse, or tool kit. Ingeniously Larry Holder started using the edge of a Mid-Week Memo which worked amazingly well. Retired photographer Tom Frey captured the personal efforts and digitally documented legible images.

Participating in the exploration were the Pastor Dr. Mike Sams, Larry Washburn, Tom and Thelda Frey, Facilities Manager James Bryant, Larry Holder, and Archives Committee members Patti Waggener, Sandy Downing, and Dr. Marvin Downing (chair). The Freys have lovingly taken hundreds of photos (some jokingly say thousands or more) covering the construction of the new worship auditorium and the demolition of the 1905 sanctuary. Holder compiled a pictorial book drawing heavily from the Freys' dedicated work.



Cornerstone fragment: Martin Mail with Hall-Moody Main Building and Dormitories.



Newspaper fragment from First Baptist Sanctuary Cornerstone, 1905.

About the Author:

Marvin Downing is the current Treasurer of JPHS and a History Professor Emeritus of the University of Tennessee at Martin. Marvin and his wife, Sandy, are members of First Baptist.